



Mishawaka Communicator



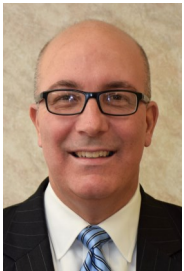
Working together to build the "Best Hometown in America" by delivering exceptional services, promoting safe and clean neighborhoods, elevating the quality of life and inspiring pride in our community.

Dave Wood, Mayor

www.mishawaka.in.gov

October 2020

A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood



Mishawaka Hums Park Renovation: Designed by the Mayor Dave Wood Youth Advisory Council

I often say that city government is the level of government that provides the vital services that we all depend on, that are felt most close to home and that most typically we know the least about, especially our youth. I go into schools often to talk about local government. I'm encouraged that while most kids know the basics about the federal government, they know less about state government and almost nothing about local government. Yet it is here that we provide the services that they depend on most. Mishawaka provides public safety in the form of police and fire protection (our number one priority), but we also provide clean and safe drinking water, wastewater management, electric, street maintenance/snow plowing, trash removal and many other vital services. I'm blessed to work with so many dedicated colleagues that share my passion for delivering world-class services to our residents. After all, we live here too and expect that level of service ourselves. I could ramble on about our services for hours and actually do every single year at my State of the City presentation.

On teaching our youth, I see it as one of my duties to be the educator-in-chief about local government. The best way I have found to reach our youth is by getting them directly involved in the governance of the City through my Mayor Dave Wood Youth Advisory Council [MYAC]. This group consists of high school students from Mishawaka High School, Marian High School and Penn High School who are nominated by teachers, coaches, counselors and other community members to participate in the year long program. They are students who want to make a difference and be the voice for the youth in their community. Students may serve a maximum of two years and are given the chance to learn about and participate in local government. Although I have written about the Youth Council previously, I mention it now because they are driving a pretty cool and innovative project. It began with a small initiative and evolved into conceiving, planning, and helping to implement the complete renovation of Hums Park on 3200 West Harrison, just west of Hums School.

Early last year, a few students who had served their two-year term found an opportunity to participate in a unique statewide program called "My Community, My Vision", sponsored by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority [IHCDA]. Youth groups from all over the state are selected for the program based on their concept to improve quality of life in their hometown. As part of the process, they are assigned a mentor, a grad student from IUPUI, to help them engage in placemaking and planning activities during the year-long process. Upon successful completion, youth groups would receive a \$5,000.00 check to put toward their community vision project. The project goal was to do something that would inspire youth to stay in or return to their hometowns. With my encouragement, the Youth Council formed an executive committee consisting of Abraham Cannon and Alicia Katzelis, seniors from Mishawaka High School; and John Tordi, Libby Voor and Hannah Hopson, seniors from Marian High School. Groups from around the state were chosen to develop and present quality of life projects of their choice to a panel of judges consisting of IHCDA members, Accelerate Indiana Municipalities [AIM] members and even the Lt. Governor of the State of Indiana, Suzanne Crouch. My group, along with four other student groups in the State of Indiana, were selected to participate.

The first step our students took was to make a list of projects they felt would make a difference in the City of Mishawaka. They discussed Mishawaka's strengths, weaknesses, why would Mishawaka benefit from a youth led plan, and how they would carry out their project idea, including what kind of a budget would be needed for their project. After having multiple moments of realization about just how expensive things were going to be, they decided to come up with a park addition that would be geared specifically for our teenage population. They came up with the idea of putting permanent tables and games like cornhole, ping pong, and cement tables with a chess/checker board on top. They also included a gaga ball pit, which I still don't understand the game, but the kids tell me it's cool. The cost for all of these items would be around \$10,000 and they soon learned that their budget of \$5,000 was just not enough. They reached out to all of the members

(cont'd on next page)



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct 23/26 Fall Camp Days
- Oct 24 Trick or Treating - Central Park 5-7p
- Oct 31 Trick or Treating - City-wide 5-7p
- Nov 11 Veterans Day - City Offices Closed
- Nov 11 Time Capsule Dedication - Battell Park
- Nov 26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday City Offices Closed
- Dec 4 Santa's Arrival & Tree Lighting
- Dec 5 Winterfest Merrifield Park

CODE ENFORCEMENT REMINDER

Trash and Recycle bins are to be left out only **during the 24 hours before and the 24 hours after** your designated weekly trash collection day.

ONLINE ACCESS



<http://mishawaka.in.gov>



<http://facebook.com/cityofmishawaka>



<http://mishawaka.in.gov/communicator>



<http://mishawaka.in.gov/parksandrecreation>



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A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood *(continued)*

of the MYAC and started brainstorming on how they could raise money for this project. The group found an opportunity through the AIM Youth Council Network. They could apply for the annual ***Excellence in Youth Leadership Award*** sponsored by Wessler Engineering. This award is given to a youth council who could present a community development project that demonstrates best practices in youth civic engagement and organizational leadership. The students submitted their application and supporting materials in early February and attended the Youth Leadership Conference at Franklin College February 22, 2020. They were excited when their name was announced and they were presented with a \$5,000.00 check to put towards their project.

The next question was **where** to put these teen-friendly amenities. Although initially the group felt that the downtown area would be good with all of the existing plans, increasing traffic and new energy there, it didn't seem to be a good fit. Then it hit me. Why couldn't they put those amenities in an existing park and why don't we let them design the park around those amenities? Then I thought: wouldn't it be a great educational opportunity to have them work on the project from concept through completion, including design of the site, selection of the amenities, creation of the budget, learning about our bid process, developing a marketing/PR plan and presenting the project to the Park Board and public just as we would? I believe it presented a great, hands-on educational opportunity that could be the first of its kind - anywhere.

The City happened to be planning a park improvement at Hums Park to upgrade the old gravel parking lot at a cost of about \$150,000. Now I don't know about you, but most kids don't get too excited about designing parking lots. I thought instead of doing the parking lot, we should prioritize using that money for the youth to develop their plan for the park. We gave them an empty canvas with a budget of \$160,000 including their \$10,000. With the approval of the City Council and Redevelopment Commission, we also funded planned park improvements at Twin Branch Park with Tax Increment Financing funds that allowed another \$200,000 of funds to flow to Hums Park. Knowing that parking is also essential, our City Engineer reprioritized funds from the street paving budget for the parking lot. All in, that original \$10,000 improvement will now be over a \$500,000 improvement to Hums Park to turn it into the state's first "teen themed" park. This project involved the entire 30-member Mayor Dave Wood Youth Advisory Council.

The group eagerly accepted the challenge and were divided into committees:

Site Planning: Chair, Garrett Sandefur with members: Dominic Mammolenti, Jessica Stewart and Seth Becker. This committee will meet with the City Planner and City Engineer and be responsible for mapping out the park — determining what portion of the park is buildable. They would be instrumental in the layout of the park.

Amenities: Chair, Drew Fox with members: Emmie Pica, Abraham Cannon, Alicia Katzelis and Hannah Hopson. This committee will choose the different amenities that are wanted for the park and will need to work with vendors to see what amenities are available. They will choose color and design of amenities and need to find out the cost to present to the budget committee.

Budget: Chair, Libby Voor with members: Olivia VanLaere, Allison Gordon and Kaylee Kern. This committee will be instrumental in determining that we stay within budget. They will help keep track of the cost, help with the bid process for amenities and construction and let the group know if additional monies will need to be raised to pay for the project.

Marketing: Chair, John Tordi with members: Emily Winters and Noah Majewski. This committee will be responsible for the promotion of our project. They will help market the project to outside sources if we decided to do a crowd-funding initiative.

These groups met with city department managers and vendors to came up with a new concept for Hums Park. Plans include:

- New playground for the younger kids
- Ninja Warrior Course — first of its kind in the State of Indiana
- New 30X36 pavilion
- New parking lot on the south side of the park
- Interior walks connecting amenities
- Multi-purpose trail around the park that will allow for walking & bike use
- New benches, picnic tables & trash cans
- Cement games: two cornhole boards, ping pong table, chess/checker table, gaga pit
- Hammock stands

Much of this work will be accomplished in-house in consultation with the students which will save money and allow funding to go further. Our own City departments involved include: Planning (site layout), Engineering (site, utilities, construction documents), Parks (amenities quoting), Mishawaka Utilities Electric and Water Divisions (onsite utilities), Central Services (demolition, construction), and Mayor (free advice). On Tuesday, September 8th, our own Central Services Department began work on the park by tearing out the old playground equipment, prepping the site for new amenities and installing the Ninja Warrior Course.

I could not be more impressed with how the Youth Council has responded to this challenge. They have taken this project on with great energy, given a lot of their time and talent and they are changing the future of their City in a very tangible way. I can see the pride on their faces when discussing the project and I know that in years to come, they will always be connected to the park that they built and will show it off to their families, friends and even children someday. Since the beginning of my Youth Council over ten years ago, the number one complaint I have heard from our teens is "there is nothing to do here". Well I think that this project will help resolve that complaint by showing our youth that not only is there something to do here but that they played a very important role in shaping it for the future of all Princess City youth.

Yours in Mishawaka,

